

When do five cents add up to a 'nickle'? Never

By Roger Boye 190

EVEN THE MOST prestigious news organizations seem to be error-prone when they run articles on numismatic-related subjects.

For example, consider the recent stories about how former President Gerald Ford helped to publicize the sale of some Franklin Mint medals. The Associated Press, the Wall Street Journal, and others carelessly referred to the medals as either coins, commemorative coins, or, perhaps

worst of all, specialty coins (whatever those are).

Of course, "coins" are pieces of metal issued by a government as money. The Franklin Mint is in no way connected with the federal government and cannot make United States coins. Nevertheless, it does make a plethora of medals — metal objects that commemorate people or events but are not "legal tender."

Apparently, the Franklin Mint is not at fault for the sloppy reporting. Its Feb. 13 press re-

lease carefully used the word "medal" in referring to the "medallic History of the American Presidency" series that Ford helped to publicize.

Reporters have also made other numismatic blunders, including these common ones that collectors are quick to notice:

- Referring to the Eisenhower dollar coin as a silver dollar, although no circulating Eisenhower dollars contain silver.

- Stating that the U.S. Mint prints paper

money. Even the novice collector knows that the Bureau of Engraving and Printing makes U.S. paper money, but in the last year, at least two major American newspapers and one syndicated columnist have given the credit to the U.S. Mint.

- Misspelling of the word "nickel." Many newspaper reporters can spell the toughies, such as "accommodation" and "questionnaire," without a hitch. Yet they stumble by referring to the 5-cent coin as a "nickle."